

Safety First

Base endorses safer methods, equipment for skaters

By MSgt Austin Carter
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It's an accident waiting to happen. Each year more than 100,000 people are treated in the nation's hospital emergency rooms for in-line skating accidents. An additional 40,000 are treated for skateboarding mishaps.

Wearing the proper gear, doctors say, could have prevented many of those injuries.

In-line skating and skateboarding are two of America's fastest growing sports. Expert skaters are able to perform amazing aerobic stunts that often stun on-lookers. Add speed and the freedom of mobility that skates provide, and it's a sure bet that novices, often youths, will slip on skates and try to imitate what they've seen on TV. But, as anyone who's ever been on skates will say, imitation before experience is the sincerest form of injury.

"I don't like wearing the equipment, but I was recently doing a 180 and I biffed it and landed on my side," said Adam Melton. "If I hadn't been wearing it, I would have hurt my whole right arm and my head. I really like the skate park because it has a half-pipe and a spine. It's fun to go there during the day."

Malmstrom opened a state-of-the-art skate park near the child development center last year to the delight of enthusiasts. Now that the park exists, skaters have abandoned the streets to hone their skills on wheels at the park.

But many of the skaters still refuse to wear the proper gear, said Kathy Desy, 341st Services Squadron family member programs flight chief.

"We're glad the skaters are using the park now," she said. "But many of them are still not using the proper gear for protection."

The park, part of the youth activities center, has minimal supervision during hours of operation. "We can't watch the kids skate from 7 a.m. to dusk during the summer and from 9 a.m. to dusk during the school year. We just don't have the personnel to do that," Desy said.

"That's why a volunteer skate patrol is being formed," she said. "This patrol will oversee the users of the park and make sure the rules are being followed."

A skate patrol will help eliminate many of the problems but, even with increased watchfulness, skaters are still responsible for seeing to their own safety.

Many skaters still refuse to wear the kneepads, elbow pads and helmet that the professionals endorse.

"(The safety equipment) is heavy but it helps because I fall a lot," said Emily Melton.



Jason Adams does a trick on his skateboard at the skate park Tuesday. Adams is wearing all the required safety equipment for the skate park.

Photo by Ann Chris Powell

'What's that red stuff?' 13-year-old skater recalls his 'younger' days

By Scott Groundknee
Veteran skater

Like, I don't like to be a hardcase or anything, but some dudes should stick to walking rather than in-line skating or skateboarding.

I've been on wheels for a few years now and the things I've seen other kids do on skates makes me want to hide my eyes, even though I used to do the same stuff myself.

That was all before the big accident.

My parents gave me my first skateboard when I was 9 because I saw this cool movie with Christian Slater about this guy who's a skateboarder who has to solve this murder mystery and he was able to trash this gang by being rad on wheels. I can't remember the name of it, but I digress.

Anyway, I got the standard lecture from my parental units about safety and they gave me all this equipment to wear. You know how it is. I said OK, but ditched the helmet and pads and stuff when I got around the corner. My little bro ratted on me once, but I was able to talk my way out of it and after I dunked his little head in the toilet one night my sibling came around to my way of thinking and it was smooth after that.

There's something about flying down the street or riding the handrails down the local savings and loan entrance stairs that gives you freedom like you've never had before. I think it's like the feeling that that Affleck guy got buzzing the tower in that Pearl Harbor movie. I can't remember the

name of that either. Or maybe I'm thinking about that movie about that Navy pilot who was out of control. "Top Something." You know the one I'm talking about. It starred that guy who used to be married to that hot Nicole what's-her-name. Geez, I'm bad with names.

Anyway, I was hanging with these skaters who called themselves the Wild Bunch. We are doing some radical things on skates. Some we do in the local skate park, some on local landmarks, which wasn't strictly legal, if you catch my drift. I'm just starting to get good on some serious flips and tricks. One day we're at this skate park and my friend Todd (I can't remember his last name) is showing off for some chicks who are watching. Now that I'm 13 and more mature and have a girlfriend, I don't normally call the females of the species "chicks." My squeeze would bust my board over the head. But I was only a snotty kid of 10 then so sue me. Anyhoo, Todd was showboating and not wearing nothing but a T-shirt, shorts and sneakers. Down he goes and I could tell right away that he was going to take a spill. He's going up the other side of the ramp and landed on his head. Normally, that's Todd's least vulnerable spot, if you catch my drift. He was laying there on the ground grinning up at us like he does when he's done a dofus move and I said to myself, "What's that red stuff?"

You guessed it. Todd's ear was half off and resembles hamburger before your dad burns it to a crisp on the BBQ. It was considerable grosse-

rious. All the girls were going "Eeeeyyyyyuuuu" like girls do when they see something that upsets them. And I wasn't feeling too peppy myself. But we all go down and try to reattach his ear and everyone's got a different opinion on how to do it. Someone went to get duct tape and Todd's screaming his head off by then and we're all getting nervous because we know we're going to catch it from our parental units even though we didn't do anything wrong. Parents are like that, don't ask me why.

To make a long story even longer, an ambulance comes by and they cart him off to the local clinic. They patched him up and he had a cool scar and he told everyone he was in a knife fight, which is a total lie. I moved to Malmstrom a year later and Todd was going to a special school that they have for backward kids, but I don't think that was because of the stunt on the ramp. I kinda think he was backward to begin with, if you catch my drift. So now I wear all that stuff like the helmet, pads and gloves. I tell every kid I see to wear it on the ramp. Some listen, some don't.

All I know is that I don't want a big scar down the side of my face like that movie with that Pacino guy, about this Cuban gangster who has this big scar down the side of his face. What's the name of that movie?

Editor's note: Scott Groundknee is a fictional character created to illustrate that even serious issues like safety can be addressed with humor.

The Proper Gear

Helmet



Elbow pads



Knee pads



Skateboard

Malmstrom's skate park has posted the following rules:

- ☐ Only in-line skates and skateboards are allowed in the park.
- ☐ Skaters must wear a helmet, elbow pads and knee pads at all times.
- ☐ No food or drinks are allowed in the park.
- ☐ No tobacco in any form.
- ☐ Noise should be kept down. Profanity won't be tolerated.
- ☐ Anyone below age 9 must be under the direct supervision of an adult at all times.
- ☐ Spectators must remain out of the park.
- ☐ Vandalism will not be tolerated.
- ☐ Skaters are asked to use good sportsmanship, courtesy and common sense.

If traveling outside the park by board or skates remember to:

- ☐ Wear the same safety equipment just as recommended at the park.
- ☐ Skate on smooth, paved surfaces without any traffic. Avoid surfaces with water, sand, gravel or dirt.
- ☐ Learn to stop safely by using the brake pads at the heel of most in-line roller skates. With one foot somewhat in front of the other, raise the toes of the front foot and push down on the heel brake.
- ☐ Do not skate at night because of the difficulty in being seen and the difficulty seeing obstacles or other skaters.